

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

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For Immediate Release

AUGUST 16, 2005

Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on August 15, 2005, **JOSEPH D. FENDER**, age 29, formerly of Effingham County, Illinois, pled guilty today in United States District Court, Benton, Illinois, to Conspiracy to Manufacture, Distribute and Possess with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of federal law. The potential penalty is not less than 10 years' up to life imprisonment, 5 years' supervised release, a \$4 million fine and a \$100 special assessment. There is no parole in the federal system. Sentencing is scheduled for December 5, 2005, at 2:00 p.m., at the United States District Court in Benton, Illinois. The conspiracy operated in and around Effingham County, Illinois, from January 2001 through November 2003.

The ongoing investigation is being conducted by the Effingham County Sheriff's Department, the Effingham City Police Department, and other local law enforcement agencies in cooperation with the Effingham County State's Attorney Edward Deters. The ongoing investigation is conducted as part of the Effingham County Project Safe Neighborhoods DRAGUN Team Initiative, a cooperative effort of local, state and federal law enforcement, and state and federal prosecuting authorities, aimed at ridding communities of drugs and guns. The case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Kit Morrissey.